

DNR Fishing Forecasts by County

Crawford, La Crosse, Monroe, Vernon counties

The historic late August flood impacted streams throughout the region, with unprecedented flooding occurring regionwide. Though the flooding caused major changes to stream habitat, the DNR has not documented major immediate impacts to trout populations. A recent electrofishing survey on Timber Coulee found similar numbers of adult brown trout before and after the flood. Fisheries staff did note that numbers of young of the year fish (fish which hatched this spring) were lower, so it's possible that a modest dip in adult trout numbers may occur in the coming years. In addition, streams where a significant portion of trout habitat has been lost may also experience some declines in the coming years. However, trout abundances on many of the impacted streams frequently exceed 1,000 adult trout per mile, so no immediate impacts to the quality of trout fishing are expected.

The past 10 days of dry weather have allowed streams to low and clear and fishing should be excellent through the remainder of the season. Anglers will probably notice that trout in the area are very robust as fish have gorged on prey that washed into the stream during the flood. Recent fishing outings on area streams have brought many hungry trout to hand on both spinners and sub-surface flies. Anglers fishing on DNR streambank easements are reminded to be respectful to landowners and are encouraged to offer help to landowners recovering in the aftermath of the August flood. – *Kirk Olson, fisheries biologist stationed in La Crosse*

Dane, Green and Rock counties

The high water is coming down in lots of our area rivers including the Sugar, Kittleston, Black Earth Creek, Vermont, and Mount Vernon, and they should be in good conditions to catch fish if we avoid any major rain events that would bring water up and turbidity. We are mindful of the effects of the floods on our infrastructure and people's homes and encourage anglers fishing on DNR streambank easements to be respectful to landowners and offer help to landowners recovering in the aftermath of the August flood. Anglers will find that the high water scoured out lots of riffles and bend pools to clean gravel and rock, creating excellent spawning habitat. Trout should be seeking out these areas as the water temps begin to cool off and days get shorter. Anglers should be able to target these fish in or near feeding riffle areas or just below them in deeper pools as fish start to think about spawning and defending territories. – *Dan Oele, fisheries biologist stationed in Fitchburg*

Marathon and Portage counties

While we didn't get hit as hard as Madison with flooding we ended up getting some high water levels but things have gone down to normal base flow. The fishing should be pretty good. We found good ranges of sizes of brown trout in a lot of stretches in the Tomorrow River, and we did see a good amount of larger fish. It's typical this time of year to see larger fish – it might be a fish making a move upstream to spawn or see a fish in spawning colors. We're seeing some larger sized fish. We Take a roll of the dice. Hit one of the small streams and you'll be surprised. There's places where we were at where we found fish

either larger or more abundant than we expected. A lot of people have their sweet spots but that's my message – try out a variety of streams. – *Tim Parks, fisheries biologist stationed in Wausau*

Iowa and Richland county streams

Overall, Iowa county streams didn't receive much flooding over the past few weeks and trout fishing is still going strong. Richland county streams were hit hard by flooding but have since receded and are now at near normal levels. Dry weather over the next few weeks will provide good opportunities for fishing throughout the southwest region.- *Justin Haglund, fisheries biologist stationed in Dodgeville*

Chippewa, Dunn, Eau Claire and Pepin counties

Fishing is expected to be good this fall due the extensive trout habitat work done and protective regulations in this stretch of Sand Creek in Dunn County. LUNKER building this summer was part of a 1,800 of intensive bank stabilization and trout habitat improvement work led by Nate Anderson, trout habitat specialist for the DNR. This work connected two former trout habitat projects making 4,700 ft of continuous trout habitat improvement work on DNR easement open to public fishing. Fisheries surveys show a very healthy brown trout population with fish as large as 23.7 inches sampled in 2018.

In addition to recently installed habitat structures providing more cover for the trout, they are also protected by a trophy regulation that prohibits the use of live bait and allows one trout over 18 inches to be kept in the lower 1.5 miles of Sand Creek. If anglers choose to harvest more fish for consumption, the upper 5 miles of Sand Creek has no minimum size limit and a 5-fish bag limit. – *Joseph Gerbyshak, fisheries biologist stationed in Eau Claire*

Marquette and Waushara counties

Most streams in this area withstood the heavy rains from earlier in September, but copious amounts of standing water did contribute to a bumper crop of mosquitos. Cooler temperatures and shorter days have helped to reduce the mosquitos and with cooler temps predicted for the coming weeks, it should get better. Recent surveys on area streams showed healthy trout populations with above average numbers on some of them. Larger trout are beginning to migrate to upper reaches and many especially brookies, are starting to display beautiful spawning colors. Leaves are starting to change and pressure this time of year is often low. So, whether it's flies, spinners or worms; take advantage of these beautiful fall days and hit one of the local streams. – *David Bartz, fisheries biologist based in Wautoma*